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MEIR B. EPHRAIM OF PADUA, SCROLL- WRITER AND PRINTER IN MANTUA.

THE history of Jewish culture owes a still unpaid debt to the Sofer or Writer of the Thora scrolls. His title reaches far back in the past, for no higher designation than Sofer could be given to Ezra, the second Moses. The Sofer¹ served the religious needs of the community, he was an indispensable worker in behalf of the ritual. Only in part a craftsman, the Sofer followed a calling as well as a trade. By the very nature of his occupation a scholar and a man of pure and pious life, the Sofer belonged to the religious officers of the congregations, for whom he provided such requisites of public and private religious observance as the scrolls of the Law, phylacteries, and mezzuzahs.

The skill of many of those engaged in the profession passed from father to son, and even to grandson, so that it sometimes became a firm family tradition. The professional title—Sofer—sometimes became a family name. Certain writers became so celebrated that their descendants retained the distinctive appellation of their ancestor, which became a surname even before the law of the country demanded the carrying of one. Early in Jewish history men of this name won a lasting reputation². Learned families of wide influence and note have made this name one of the best known and respected in Jewish annals³.

¹ "Simply writer," סופר סת"ם ספרים חפץ מווחח.

² Cf. e.g. Sabbatai Sofer of Przemyśl, vide my essay in *המאסף*, ed. Sokolow, V, 125 sqq., שומר ציון הנאמן רמ"ש; R. Jona Landsofer, the author of the *Responsa* מעיל צדקה, vide *שם הגדולים* Asulai, II, 84, ed. Benjacob, took his name from the office of Writer to the Rabbinate of Bohemia.

³ About R. Mose Sofer of Frankfort on Maine, cf. Kaufmann, *R. Jair*

Though in part a religious occupation, the work of the Sofer also belonged to art. The Sofer is the representative of untrammelled art in the ghetto. His art indeed was regulated by fixed canons which, carefully formulated in the ritual law, accompanied him in every stroke of the pen. But in the variations in the dimensions of his scroll, in the shape and size of the letters, the Sofer had freedom enough to display artistic taste and to relieve the uniformity of his work by original embellishments. Hence we find men of this profession with a kind of certificate of merit subjoined to diplomas or letters of recommendation such as were usual in other branches of practical art. Thus in the years 1656-7 three masters of this craft, Raphael b. Jechiel Michael Mengeburg¹, Abraham b. Jehoshua, both of Amsterdam, and Joel b. Isaac Heilbronn, certify of Moses b. Benjamin that he had acquired the qualification to prepare scrolls of the Law in accordance with all the traditional prescriptions².

This close relation to art produced among the circle of scribes artists who, at periods when books were only circulated as MSS., embellished Hebrew works with illustrations which have not yet received their due appreciation in the history of art. The strict precepts to be observed in the occupation which was properly theirs gave them training and skill, and, where the former did not interfere, their superabundant power longed to vent itself by giving free play to the imagination. In spite of the havoc wrought among Jewish MSS. by persecutions, fires, and, above all, by the invention of printing, there are plenty of proofs that the Jewish scribes were initiated in all the contrivances of drawing and colouring, that they tried their skill at all sorts of animal and floral embellishments, and that their

Chajjim Bacharach, p. 57, n. 3. Cf. the name Sofer in Hock, *Die Familien Prags*, pp. 233-238.

¹ Cf. Kaufmann, *Die letzte Vertreibung der Juden aus Wien*, p. 193, n. 3.

² A. Neubauer, *Catalogue of the Hebrew MSS. in the Bodleian Library*, p. 158, n. 797.

flow of fancy displayed itself even in the execution of demoniacal contortions and Gothic convolution of animal figures. In fact, the gulf between the scribe and the copyist, the illuminator of MSS., was not, after all, so very wide¹.

No profession was more intensely affected by Guttenberg's new art of multiplying and embellishing the works of literature than the copyists. It is true, the Sofer was safeguarded against the extinction of his particular profession by the ritual injunctions, which excluded the products of printing; yet his principal source of profit, which was mainly derived from copying, was gone. As a matter of course, many members of that profession turned their attention to the new invention, which spread with marvellous rapidity. Those who hitherto had been engaged in the sale of MSS. now became the printers and publishers of books in their new form².

The most memorable instance of such combination of the two professions of scribe and printer is offered by Meir or Mose Meir b. Ephraim of Padua. Nothing is known about his descent and the history of his youth. It is doubtful whether he himself had been born in Padua; the designation "of Padua" may denote that this town had been the home of his father or one of his ancestors, after whom the family, which lived in Mantua, was named. There is, at any rate, nothing to prove that Meir settled in Mantua when grown up. He was born at the commencement of the sixteenth century, and, according to the fashion of the time, devoted himself undoubtedly to the study of the Law at a very early age. It seems that Meir tried several other occupations before he determined to utilize his great skill in writing by becoming a professional writer of scrolls. We know at least

¹ Cf. Kaufmann, "Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Handschriften-Illustration," in D. H. Müller and I. v. Schlosser's *Haggadah von Sarajevo* (Wien, 1898).

² Cf. e.g. about the printers Meir ben David Sofer and Mordechai Sofer, Steinschneider, *Cat. Bodl.*, p. 2981, no. 8742, and p. 2980, no. 8734.

from his own report that it was only on October 23, 1541, that he resolved to write for the first time a ritual scroll of the Torah. This was completed on April 10, 1542, and was sold to Jechiel Foa of Arezzo by the intervention of Eliah Dayena¹, a prominent Italian Rabbi. After that time he usually only wrote when he received an order from some pious person who considered it a meritorious act to obtain a scroll of the Law written by the master-hand of this scribe who was famous all over Italy. The incidents of his life from the time that he first commenced writing scrolls are fully known to us. For he used to enter at the end of the exemplar from which he copied his scrolls, as in a diary, the time it took to execute each scroll, and the number of sheets of parchment used, and other particulars. He thus composed a memoir of his activity, and we become acquainted with all those pious clients of his, among whom we meet with the best names of his age and his country. This memoir has received the well-merited distinction of being preserved in the greatest synagogue of Mantua, where it is kept at the present day². His first client was Jacob Cohen, who was, if I conjecture rightly, identical with Jacob b. Aaron Gabriel Zarfati, reader in the synagogue in Mantua³, for whom Meir wrote a scroll between June 30 and October 27, 1542. His third copy, which was an experiment to write a small-size scroll, came to Casalmaggiore, and belonged to Moses Levi, to whom it was sold by Isaac Porto; it was written between December 16, 1542, and April 18, 1543.

Besides this, he must occasionally have written phylacteries also; at any rate, the demand for their production

¹ Cf. *Revue des Études Juives*, X, 196, no. 161.

² Zunz, *Zur Geschichte*, p. 252, drew only from Portaleone's שלש הגבורים. Cf. *Mortara*, חכמי איטליה, p. 46, n. 3. I owe the copy communicated in the appendix to the intercession of my friend Rabbi Giuseppe Jaré, in Ferrara. It was transcribed by Professor Isaiah Levi, Rabbi of Mantua.

³ Cf. *Revue des Études Juives*, X, 190, n. 1, where we find his signature thus: נאום אני יעקב בר אהרן גבריאל צרפתי שמש מביה הנכסה של השמשים בק"ק מנצונה.

by his master-hand became so great that for a time he had to devote himself exclusively to that branch of his art. It appears that this drew upon him the antagonism of a competitor, Benjamin by name; but the strife was rather profitable than injurious to him, for it caused his name to be commemorated on the pages of the literature of Jewish *Responsa*. Kalman, i.e. Kalonymus b. Eliezer, Rabbi of Mantua, laid the objection raised by Benjamin against Meir b. Ephraim's mode of writing the sections of the phylacteries before no less an authority than that of the two great Rabbis of his time; namely, Meir b. Isaac, Rabbi of Padua, famous throughout the diaspora for his learning, and the not less celebrated Nathan b. Menahem Eger, Rabbi of Cremona. Their decisions, dated December 20 and 18, 1543, are in favour of Meir's mode of writing¹. Meir himself applied to Abraham b. Isaac Pisa of Bologna, a man highly revered both on account of his descent and of his own merits. This Rabbi replied in two *Responsa*, dated December 20 and 27, 1543, and adopted the same view as the two other Rabbinical authorities². The honourable title applied by R. Abraham to Meir's father-in-law, who personally delivered to him Meir's letter, together with the decision of the Rabbi of Padua, proves that Meir's wife was descended from a distinguished family³.

We find that he was again busy writing a scroll on November 17, 1545, which he could not, however, complete before October 26, 1546, on account of his numerous orders for phylacteries. This particular specimen became the property of Eliah Pesach of Imola through the agency of Aaron of Novellara and Solomon Sabionetta, a nephew of the former. His fifth scroll, which he prepared for Menachem Ashkenazi of Lodi, occupied him from March 11 till October 25, 1547. The sixth specimen was ordered by

¹ Cf. my communication in *Revue*, XXXII, 130 sqq.; *ibid.*, p. 131, ll. 5 and 6. read 1543.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 132, יצ"ו חמשה עשר אלף.

Joseph Norlenghi (i. e. Nördlingen) of Cremona. In a few cases he leaves Mantua for the purpose of executing his task in the house of his pious client and under his very eyes, so as to be fully the latter's representative in the fulfilment of the religious duty of writing a scroll of the Torah. Thus he worked from December 19, 1550, till January 2, 1552, in the house of Raphael Cohen Fagiuoli¹, and wrote his seventh scroll; the order had been procured by Eliezer of Guastalla². During the years 1553 and 1554 he was engaged in the execution of three orders: one from Mose Zebi Vercellesi, a brother-in-law of Samson Massarani³ of Mantua—again procured by Isaac Porto; the second order from Jechiel of Carpi in Lodi had been procured by Solomon Marini; and the third from Raphael of Viceno, near Novara. Between April 16, 1555, and January 7, 1556, he worked on a scroll for Baruch Todros. But this time cannot have been spent in the preparation of one scroll only; for we find that at the beginning of the year 1557 he executed an order for Jehudah b. Nathan Nördlingen in scarcely three months.

Quite in the spirit of a Sofer of antiquity, Meir b. Ephraim was also esteemed and sought after as a teacher of the young, especially as an instructor of Hebrew and Biblical exegesis. It is owing to his activity in this direction that a man of the rank and scientific importance of Abraham Portaleone became his pupil, and all his life kept in grateful remembrance the services rendered him by Meir's instruction⁴.

¹ I am indebted for this explanation of the name פאגיוולי to G. Jaré.

² The name of Eliezer ben Solomon Guastalla (מוסטאלה) appears repeatedly in the signatures of the most distinguished members of the congregation during the Tamari trial; vide אלה הדברים (Mantua, 1566).

³ Two men bore the name of Samson Massarani in 1565: the one was the son of Jechiel, the other was Isaiah Massarani. About Chayim Massarani, who enjoyed the title of אלוף, and who was a brother-in-law of Azariah di Rossi, vide Zunz, כרם, V, 134, and VII, 119.

⁴ ויבולותי קראתי ופטרתי תורה נביאים וכתובים בקדוק רב עם: f. 185 c, שלשי חגבורים ו' הסופרים המובהק' כמה"ר מאיר מפאדובה ו'ל וכמ"הר יהוסף זרקה ו'ל

But he was not destined to continue devoting all his time to the writing of scrolls and the instruction of the young. We do not know the reasons that induced him to undertake other duties. It was perhaps due to the heartrending reports of the persecutions to which Jewish literature was subjected by the satellites of Paul IV, who publicly burned numbers of books in many Italian towns¹. Mantua was a haven of refuge to the Jews, who were still protected by the kindness of the dukes of the house of Gonzaga; and it may be that the peaceful writer of scrolls residing there may have formed the resolution to come to the rescue of the bitterly persecuted literature by founding a printing establishment and a publishing office. Whatever the cause, we find that Meir b. Ephraim was engaged, from the year 1556, in erecting in Mantua a new home for the sale of Jewish books, in place of the other Italian centres of that trade, which were, as it were, burned to the ground in one night. He worked in this new direction sometimes alone, and sometimes with partners. The difficulties he had to contend with at the commencement must have appeared to him as well-nigh insurmountable. In his despair he entered the year 1557 in his Sofer diary as a year of many and heavy sufferings. It is a sort of monument of this mourning that the entry concerning his thirteenth scroll, which he had commenced April 15, 1557, remained unfinished, and that he omitted to mention anything about his fourteenth order.

Progressing from small beginnings to larger enterprises in the book trade, and secure of the assistance of an expert partner in the person of Jacob b. Naftali Cohen from Gasolo², who had before managed the printing

¹ M. Stern, *Urkundliche Beiträge über die Stellung der Päpste zu den Juden*, p. 98 sqq.

² According to the account book of the Holy Society of Mantua, in my possession, pp. 25 c and 24 a, it appears that Jacob Gasolo and a daughter died between 1570 and 1573.

establishment of Tobia b. Eliezer Foa in Sabionetta, Meir ventured to undertake the printing of the Zohar, a task which was not only important as a business venture, but was also of historic significance. Jacob, formerly Meir's employé or foreman, appears here already as his associate¹. The printers' firm seems quickly to have risen to fame. For when Emanuel b. Gabriel Cropuli, of the family Gallichi, who was really the promoter and corrector of the first edition of the Zohar, resolved to have the book printed, his choice fell upon the printers of Mantua on account of the correctness and beauty of their work. The book was printed from MSS. of Emanuel of Benevento, the great-grandfather of David Conforte², which were, moreover, collated with two copies of that work belonging to the physician Jehuda ben Moses Blanes and Eliakim ben Isaiah of Macerata; and the result was that the first attempt to print so diffuse and frequently obscure a work presented everything that could possibly be expected³. But great as the desire was to possess in print a work which as a MS. was inaccessible except at great cost, the scruples against the publication of the book were, on the other hand, considerable. The grief at the burning of the Talmud, the fear of new persecutions on the part of the Church, were too intense in the leading circles of Italian Jewry to permit the issue of a book, round which so much controversy was clustered, to be passed with

¹ In *in my possession*), sub finem, which was unknown to Zunz, *Zur Geschichte*, p. 253, and the date of which Benjacob, *Thesaurus*, p. 16, n. 308, was unable to fix, we read: בשם הסופר כמ"ה מאיר יצ"ו בכמר אפרים ולה"ה מפרגה . . . על יד יעקב בכמר נפתלי הכהן וז"ל מנאוול: ג"ם י"ן השבו לספירה ש"ז. I find him already as companion of Meir in the edition of the *משהשיטת של* כר' ימים לחדש אייר שנת ויש' זל' a fragment of which on parchment is in my possession. Another edition of ז"ל וי"ל יעקב מר"ר from 1571, equally unknown to Zunz, bears the name of Meir b. Ephraim alone.

² קורא הורוה, ed. D. Cassel, f. 40 a.

³ Cf. Emanuel Cropulo's preface to his edition of the Zohar. About Joseph Marli's letter to Emanuel, cf. Zunz, *Literaturgeschichte*, p. 422, n. 1. Mortara, *במכתר*, p. 17, writes da Corofoli.

indifference¹. The permission to print the book had been obtained in Mantua during the reign of the duke Guglielmo Gonzaga, but it could not be upheld in the face of the pronounced opposition against the publication that had arisen in the midst of the Jews themselves². Heavy times commenced for Meir ben Ephraim. But Menahem ben Joseph Tanchum of Mantua³ came to the rescue of the persecuted and menaced book; by his assistance the support of the Church was gained for the undertaking, and thus the last obstacle was removed. The cardinal-bishop of Mantua issued a declaration on April 25, 1558, to the effect that the printing of the book was permitted⁴. It took three years before the book finally came from the press in three quarto volumes. Before it was completed an edition of the work appeared, printed by Vicenti Conti in Cremona, which, being studiously advertised, threatened for a moment to jeopardize the whole undertaking by its rivalry⁵. But the intrinsic value, the decided superiority of the Mantua edition were too obvious, and secured its triumph over the other edition.

But the exigencies of the times came to the aid of the inner and outer excellency of the work. It was the mournful epoch in the history of the Jews of Italy when the Talmud was torn away from them, and they were not even allowed to quench their thirst for the knowledge of the Law in

¹ Cf. the "Approbations" before the תקוני הדור, and Isaac de Latas, *Responsa*, ed. M. H. Friedländer, Vienna, 1860, p. 124 sqq.

² Emanuel Cropulo, in his preface to the Zohar: מ"י מצערי גבר כוננו כי באנו מן"שנבה העיר המהוללה עיר גרולה של חכמים וסופרים ואנשי מנשה והמפרסם אשר ראינו בתוכה עושים מלאכתם לשם שמים ובאמונה וזרזים לעשות מלאכתם כחורה וכלולה שלא לעשות מלאכת יי' רמיה ואתם אותיות מיושרות ומאוסרות ונייר טוב לא נמצא כן בכל הדפוסים חתרו להשיג הרש' מהשר יר"ה להדפיס ובריתו היתה אתנו: כסוב לבנו להדפיס לא הונח לנו ולא ידענו מי נביע אשרה אצל מוכב יי' עד כי לא מצאנו ידינו ורגלינו לצאת מתוך ההפכה: וחסרי יי' לא תמו וגלגל זכות עי' וכאי ואנה יי' לפנינו המרוסם כמ"ד מנחם הנחום יצ"ו בכמ"ד יוסף הנחום וצ"ל ממנ"שובה ושפיה גרים עבר עליו רוח קנאה וקנא לאלדיו ולתורתו נכנס בשבי הקורה וסבב פני הדבר בחכמתו עם החשמן יר"ה ארון יקר רוח איש תבונה.

³ In 1565 he signed his name מנחם בכמ' יוסף תנחום ו'.

⁴ Cf. M. Stern, l. c. 122, no. 116.

⁵ Cf. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, IX², 361 sq.

secret. The Talmud was once again, as in the time of its commencement, entrusted, or rather assigned, to the memory. Contemporaneously with the Zohar, Juda ibn Tibbon's Hebrew translation of Bachja ben Joseph's *Duties of the Heart* appeared at Meir ben Ephraim's printing-office. The excellent edition offered a reliable text based on MSS.; the quotations from the Talmud were to be given with references to the passages where they occurred, and the learned editor, Abraham b. David Provenzali, could do this only either from memory, or in some rather roundabout way¹. In this stress of circumstances the new enterprise of Mantua came as an act of deliverance, the disclosing of a new source serving as a kind of consolation and compensation for the Talmudic literature, the loss of which was so bitterly felt.

Being thus deeply engaged in the affairs of his business as publisher, he could not as before follow up his original vocation. He had commenced to write a scroll of the Law on November 29, 1560, for one of the most distinguished members of the congregation of Mantua, Mordechai ben Isaac Trabotto²; but on June 30, 1562, he had only finished the mere text, without having yet given it the ornamental little crowns. His next orders were two small scrolls for Gianvarna of Alexandria, the brother-in-law of Hoseah di Colonia, and for a brother-in-law of Menahem Sinai in the same town. He finished the second of these on May 21, 1563. He undertook another order on October 21 of the same year for Elishama Zarfati, and completed it on April 6, 1564. He was occupied with the writing of his nineteenth scroll from June 13, 1564, till June 29, 1565; his client was Jehudah di Colonia. He buried his mother on March 9, 1565, in the cemetery of Mantua³; her life

¹ Fol. 103 b we read: להיות התלמוד בעד"ר בלתי נמצא אצלנו לעת עתה ולא היה ספק בדינו לשמור סוד המוקדם והמאוחר בפ' ופרק' כי הוצרכנו לרשום מקומם ממה שנשאר בזכרוננו עדיין ומדרכים אחרים בלתי סלולים.

² His signature was: v. מרוכי יצ"ר בכמ"ר יצחק טריבוט ו'.

³ In Mantua's פנקס מדבתי חיים וגמילות חסדים (in my possession), which covers the years 1550-1628, we find (f. 8 b) the entry: ע' נכנס ע"י ר' מאיר' .מפארוה יצ"ר עביר קבורה אביו תנצ"בה ונקברה ש' כרצו שכה.

had been despaired of four years before that time, for in 1561 he entered in his diary that his mother's illness hindered the execution of his work. The remainder of the year 1565 he was engaged in the execution of an order which he had received from the congregation of Pisa through Jacob Fabriano and Solomon ben Samuel Colorni¹; the work occupied him till May 15, 1566.

His importance in the congregation had considerably increased, and he was in 1565 elected president of two societies; one was the Society of the Talmud Torah, and the other a charitable society. In this double capacity he signed², on March 25 of that year, the memorable document which the most distinguished members of the congregation issued on the dispute between the Rabbis Mose Provinciale and Pinchas Elia di Melli on the one hand and the six Dayanim of the German congregation of Mantua on the other, and in which a decided and public declaration was given in favour of the former. Besides his signature, there appears also that of his brother David³, whose son Ephraim became afterwards Meir's son-in-law and successor in the publishing business. In that year we find as his partner in printing Isaac b. Josef Sullam, who signed also as member of the congregation of Mantua the document of March 25⁴.

There existed a close friendship between Meir ben Ephraim and Mose ben Abraham Provinciale⁵, the learned Rabbi of Mantua, whose authority on questions of the Law was appealed to from all parts like that of an oracle. Meir's inquiries on matters connected with his work of a scribe and its precepts were made by Provinciale the subject of more or less ample expositions, and were embodied by the latter in his

¹ He signs his name: שלמה בכמ' שמואל מקלורנו ז"ל, אלה הדברים, v.

² l. c. הוציע מאיר בר' אפרים זצ"ל מפאדובה ממונה מקופת תלמוד תורה וממונה מקופת הדפוקה.

³ Ibid. דוד יצ"ו בכמ' אפרים ז"ל מפאדובה.

⁴ See the title-page of מדע אהבה וזמנים (Mantua, 1565). Two other members of the family Sullam in Mantua, Abraham b. Jacob and Josef b. Meir, sign also the mentioned declaration.

⁵ Cf. Zunz, *חכמים*, V, 157, VII, 123.

The greater part of the year 1566 was devoted by Meir to the execution of an order which he had received from one of the most distinguished members of the congregation of Mantua, namely, the president David Fontanella, i.e. David ben Raphael Jacob Finzi of Fontanella³. A scroll of the largest size had to be written, and the work filled the space between May 19, 1566, and January 3, 1567. A similar order, although not quite so difficult a one, from Mose, a member of the distinguished Mantuan family of Chazak⁴, kept him engaged up to August 22, 1567. Towards the end of the year he undertook to write a scroll for Raphael Pesach in Solarolo, near Cremona. It was only finished on July 4, 1568, because he had to write during the same period a number of scrolls of the Book of Esther and of phylacteries. He undertook the writing of a scroll for Joshua Cohen of Vercelli and his three brothers on October 17 of the same year, and finished the work on March 8, 1569. It was not before October 19 that he commenced a scroll ordered by Judah Leon Morello of Pavia through Solomon di Ostilia; he finished it on May 25,

² In my MS. of various of R. Mose's *Responsa*, there is one of Sunday, Ellul 26, 1564, commencing thus: י"ו: כמר מאיר מארובה הסופר י"ו: מרוך קצת אהזו להן זה מצט בשנים להרליק נרות במקומן בנכסת השנים בליל י"ב הכפזרים בשעת תפלה וקריאת הסליחות היום ובסופו ע"י גוי מכתב אוחז על י"ב אהזו התפלה בליל כניסתו כ"ה להשקיר למחרת לפנות ערב אם יש היתר דבר

⁴ Ibid.: הצעיר משה בכ"מ שלמה חזק א"א וצ"ל.

1570. The remainder of the year was devoted to a work ordered through Solomon ben Emanuel di Pontremoli, Reader of Mantua¹, by Elia Trabotti of Regili. Jechiel ben Boas di Baruch procured him on May 17, 1571, an order from Joseph ben Mattathia Treves of Savigliano in Piedmont², one of the most learned Rabbis of Italy, and the task was completed on December 23 of the same year. Immediately after he received another order from Joseph Jechiel di Corte Maggiore, the son of Abraham Viceno, which he finished on August 3, 1572, except the little crowns on certain letters.

However fully engaged as a scribe, though, on account of his fame as a reliable and correct writer, overwhelmed with orders, the indefatigable man still found sufficient leisure to look after the management of his publishing trade, and to issue new works from his press, which was placed in the house of Giacomo Rufinelli³. A new undertaking in the publishing line, and this time one of greater magnitude and significance, was executed before the end of the year. The inquisitor of Mantua, Giovanni Battista de Milano, issued on April 10, 1572, a permit to our Meir ben Ephraim—for it is he whom I recognize under the designation of “the Jew Mirra de Crescino of Padua”—and his partner to print and publish Maimūni’s *Code of the Law*, with the commentary, *Keseph Mishnah*, by R. Joseph Karo⁴.

¹ Ibid. : נאם שלמה בנ”מ צמנואל מפונטרמולו וצ”ל שמש ק”ק מנשובה יצ”ו.

² We read on the title-page of his *Responsum* on the Venturazzo trial : החכם האמתי הגאון מו”ה הרר יוסף פרויש יצ”ו.

³ The print : בריקת של מהר”ר יעקב ווי”ל יצ”ו, omitted by Zunz, l. c., is from the year 1571.

⁴ M. Stern, l. c., 146, No. 137. My friend, Professor Guiseppe Jaré, Chief Rabbi of Ferrara, is in possession of the title-page of an edition of the first three books of Maimūni’s *Mishna Torah* published by Meir ben Ephraim. The title-page represents a portico flanked by tortuous pillars, and the title is : עם מראה מקום ו”ל צם מראה מקום : מהפוסקי’ והסוקים ועם מפתחות מכללי הלכותיו ונוסף על אלה הגהות ובאורים תועלת’ מאד לתלמידים ולמלמדים אשר עין לא היו בכל הנדפסים עד היום הזה ועליהם במושב וקנים יתלמדו : נדפס פה מנשובה תחת ממשלת רוממו’ אדוננו וינציצואו דוכוס מנשובה יסונשו יתלמדו :

R. Menahem Azariah di Fano was at that time only twenty-four years of age, and yet stood already on terms of friendship with the great teacher of the whole diaspora who resided in Safed. R. Menahem had been honoured by the latter with the charge of having his work printed in Italy¹, and it may be that the former offered the printing of the book to Meir ben Ephraim even before the monumental Venice edition of 1574 was commenced. He was probably acquainted with the famous scribe of Mantua; himself almost a youth, his legal decisions on points of religious law had been applied for by the aged printer and writer of scrolls; we find traces of this in the former's *Responsa*².

Meir ben Ephraim prepared himself on October 4, 1572, for the thirtieth time, to execute an order for a scroll of

פיראמו ירום הידו והתנשא מלכותו אכיר : בשם הדפוס כמר מאיר י"צו בכמר אפרים ו'ל
 בראש חודש מרחשון שנת שכ"ז לפ"ק. This book was already printed in 1565 under the reign
 of Guglielmo Gonzaga, and finished כמר יצ"ל בכמר אפרים ו'ל. Isaac b. Joseph Sullam was then the companion of Meir. On the
 title-page we read : כמר יצ"ל בכמר אפרים ו'ל. כפאדובה וכמ"ר יצחק בכמ"ר יוסף סלם יצ"ל ו'ל. It is certainly the edition of
 Maimūni's work, on which the ambassador of Mantua, Aurelio Zibramonte, wrote on January 11, 1584, to his court : "M. Gio. Paulo Eustacchio Renato
 è stato a dirmi questa matina che essendo caritati qui in Douana alcuni libri del Rabi Moise stampati già 16 anni in cotesta città ha ritrovato
 in essi molti errori et che per rispetto di V. A. non vuol farli abbruggiare ma li purgarà" (*Il Bibliofilo*, An. v. No. 2, Bologna, 1884). Compare Zunz,
Zur Geschichte, p. 257, who did not know the year of this edition. See also Steinschneider, *Cat. Bodl.*, p. 1873 (10-11), and 2982 (no. 8745). The reprint
 under Vincenzo Gonzaga is so slavishly literal that the line : כמר יצ"ל בכמר אפרים ו'ל. כפאדובה
 כמר יצ"ל בכמר אפרים ו'ל. is also retained, though Meir was no longer alive when Vincenzo came to the throne in 1587.

¹ Cf. Conforte, קורא הדורות, ed. D. Cassel, fol. 42 b.

² Nos. 37 and 38. The latter *Responsum* is, according to fol. 37 b, certainly written after 1576, for ז"ל is added to the name כמר יצ"ל. R. Menahem Azaria praises Meir's mastery in the art of drawing the crowns in the following terms, fol. 39 a : וכבר קלסחך באומנות ההגין באוני שאר הסופרים : מחבנה מעשך בפניהם השתא (No. 37) and וראי אישור דרי דשאר ספרייך למהוי כחכימיא [Sotah 49^a] כי ראיתו כבודך ויציא לקראת נשך בחבילי' של לשונות מועק' מהדור.

the Law. It was an order of a particularly honourable character, and Meir executed it with enhanced zeal; for it was given by the venerable and celebrated Aminadab di Fano of Mantua¹. The text without the crowns was finished already on April 10, 1573. From June 9 till December 17 of the same year he worked at the execution of an order which he had received through the distinguished Rabbi of Asti, Abraham ben Meshullam of Agnello², from Eliezer Poggietto, who intended to present his nephew, Mose Treves, with a scroll of the Torah written by Meir's master-hand. The work was finished on December 17, 1573. He thereupon worked on another scroll from February 14 till June 29, 1574, ordered by Abraham ben Malkiel de Villanova through Solomon di Pontremoli. Already on August 16 he was engaged in writing a fresh scroll for Juda Leon Morello, which was completed on January 27, 1575. He commenced another on March 17, this time for a woman, Diana del Bene³, and finished it on August 19. He received on October 9, 1575, through Isaac Norzi, an order from the latter's brother-in-law, Meshullam Kusi⁴, which was executed by the beginning of May, 1576. But the latter half of that year was destined to terribly disturb the peace which the indefatigable scribe had hitherto enjoyed. The plague had broken out in Mantua⁵, and had also invaded the quiet home of Meir ben Ephraim. Three victims fell to its fury: his daughter and daughter-in-law and his manservant succumbed in rapid succession. We learned from the account-book of the Chevra Kadisha for the first time that our printer and scribe went in the Ghetto of Mantua also by the name of Meir Talliano, i. e. Italiano⁶.

¹ His signature, which is the second on the declaration of March 25, 1565, reads: *הדצער עמינר יצ"ו בנכ"ו שלמה וצ"ל מפאנו*.

² Cf. *Revue des Études Juives*, X, 185, note 2.

³ Cf. about this family, Kaufmann in *JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW*, VIII, 517.

⁴ Cf. Mortara, *מוכר*, p. 18.

⁵ The chief of the congregation, the revered Rabbi Mose Provinciale, died on July 30. Zunz, *Monatstage*, p. 42.

⁶ This I infer, because the above-mentioned פנקס, f. 27 a, equally with

Scarcely had he commenced on June 10, 1576, a work for Kalonymos ben Samuel, ordered by Mordechai Soncino¹, when the plague made its appearance in the Ghetto, and constant anxiety banished for a long time all thought of vocation and labour. The year 1577 had already commenced, before he could complete his task. On January 22 he had made such progress that it only wanted the crowns, and we see him already on March 12 start on a fresh task which his heart was particularly set on, for it was the fulfilment of the wish of a dear deceased relative. His nephew Mose, the son of his brother David, desired to possess a scroll of the Torah written by the hand of his uncle. Both father and son had died since. The task was completed before September 2, the New Year's Day of 5338. On December 10 of the same year, he commenced another scroll, which he had promised Abraham Levi dell' Arpa² to complete for the latter's father-in-law Mose ben Menahem Pugliese³ in Lodi. Although the work was interrupted for two months because no parchment could be obtained, yet the work was as good as finished on June 24, 1578. It seems that he lost his wife in the course of that year⁴. He obtained again through Abraham Agnello, Rabbi of Asti, an order from Eliezer Poggietto, one of the most distinguished members of his congregation, who wished to see a small-size scroll written by the hand of the master of Mantua. He started the work on October 14 and finished it on March 6, 1579.

The execution of his fortieth scroll, which he was charged

Meir's journal, contains the entry of three deaths under that name : (1) קרקע ר' מאיר מליאנו, (2) קרקע ר' מאיר מליאנו, (3) קרקע ר' מאיר מליאנו.

¹ Ibid., fol. 35 b c, it is mentioned that a son of this Mordechai died on September 3, 1586, and (fol. 38 b) a daughter on July 3, 1592.

² Ibid., fol. 35 d, after May 21, 1587, alluded to as already dead when his son died.

³ About this spelling and the name Pugliese of Appulia, cf. עולם, ed. Adelman, p. 18, note 16, and Luzzatto in Polak's קדם, pp. 66, 67.

⁴ Ibid., fol. 30 a, we read before September 29, 1578 : קבורת אשתו הנצבה ויש משכן.

to write by Mordechai ben Rafael Norzi, was again connected with most painful reminiscences. He had started the work on June 25, 1579, when during the festival season a quite unexpected trial fell to his share and landed the peaceable old man in prison. The restless plottings of the Inquisition at last necessarily interfered also with Mantua, the last refuge of the Jewish book trade. The documents necessary for elucidating these events are still missing, but Meir's short entry in his diary is sufficiently eloquent to make us understand that the denunciations and plottings on the part of an inquisitor of Jewish extraction must have brought persecutions upon the Jewish congregation of Mantua which they had hitherto been spared. The old printer and publisher was arrested immediately after the Jewish New Year. He had to suffer the pain of being kept separated from the prayers of his brethren on the Day of Atonement; he pined in solitary confinement. It must have been an unlawful, or, at least, a culpably rash arrest; for already after twelve days the authorities were compelled to set him free, and on the Hoshaanah Day he could again join his brethren in prayer. The mental sufferings which he had to undergo in conjunction with other accidents, such as the spraining of a foot, threw him on a bed of sickness. He was ill for six months, and it was miraculous that the old man possessed the staying power to rise again after so many untoward events and to recover sufficiently to again undertake fresh work. He rejoiced in completing on June 1, 1580, Norzi's scroll, a work bound up with so many miseries.

Afterwards he started afresh with renewed vigour, as if he were bent upon compensating for precious time lost. On June 12 he commenced a fresh scroll for Mose ben Samuel di Melli of Viadana, and completed it on November 22, 1580. He completed two scrolls in 1581: one for Chananja of Gazolo¹ between January 15 and June 20,

¹ This must be Chananja Finzi of Gazolo. Cf. Zunz, *Zur Geschichte*, p. 258, and Steinschneider, *Cat. Bodl.*, p. 2864, no. 7944.

and the other for Samuel Jechiel ben Chayim Cohen of Alexandria between July 20 and December 10. On April 15, 1582, he commenced writing the scroll which he was not destined to finish. He had undertaken to write it for his cousin Mose ben Melito, and it would have been the forty-fourth. The last entry in his diary refers to it, but he could only note down when he commenced it; death overtook him during the execution. His eye remained bright, his hand firm to the last. At an age when other people have long lost strength and faculties he was still bent upon his arduous task with juvenile vigour. The tombstone of the Meir ben Baruch Jamnitz, who was buried in Prague in 1667, records that that writer of scrolls of the Torah had had the privilege of writing fifty scrolls in which no mistake could be detected¹. Meir ben Ephraim completed only forty-three, but his art had remained faithful to him even to his last year, and every specimen was a pattern of its kind, so that the scrolls from his hand became, like the model codices of former centuries, standard patterns for long periods of time and for distant countries. He had raised his handicraft to an art, in which he secured his place, even when the publishing trade in which he had engaged also proved more and more unfavourable to him by untoward vicissitudes. It was evidently due to the influence of the Inquisition, which became also triumphant in Mantua, that no publishing enterprise of Meir ben Ephraim's, during the latter years of his life, can be recorded. This energetic and indefatigable man was compelled to look on, when the emporium of the Jewish book trade, which he had helped to establish, gradually decayed and dissolved. In his old age he nearly became a martyr to his calling of printer of Mantua, and had to be grateful that he suffered no more than the painful recollections of the grave danger that threatened him.

Meir ben Ephraim was well stricken in age when he died.

¹ See Hock, *Die Familien Prags*, p. 234.

He was interred in Mantua on November 17, 1583¹. His memory remained fresh long after his death. The types used in his printing-office came into the possession of his nephew Ephraim ben David and belonged afterwards to Elishama ben Israel Sifroni², and were utilized during the short period during which Jewish printing still managed to flourish in Mantua. But Meir ben Ephraim's fame endured above all through his labour as a scribe. The fame of his accuracy procured him during his lifetime the esteem and recognition of the greatest Rabbis of his time, the friendship of R. Mose Provinciale and R. Menahem Azariah di Fano. The same fame raised the scrolls that emanated from his hands, and which were spread all over Italy, to the rank of precious relics, the possession of which was the pride of individuals and congregations. Not less an authority than Abraham Portaleone asserted, in 1607³, that of all the forty-three scrolls not a single one was ever questioned even as to the smallest details by the most expert judges.

D. KAUFMANN.

APPENDIX.

זכרה לי אלהי לטובה אמן.

התחלתי לכתוב ס"ת ראשון בעזרת האל היום יום ב' מרחשון כ"ג אוטו' שנת ש"ב לפק נשלם י' אפר' ש"ב מכרתי אותו לכ"מ יחיאל פואה באמצעות על יד הנאון כמנהרג אליה דייאני והוליכו באריו טו' אנוש' ש"ב.

¹ In פנקס of Mantua, fol. 35 a, we read: ש"ק י"ז הנ"ל [נבי'] בעד הזקן: כמה"ר מאיר מזרואה ז"ל ל' לש' [i.e. said 30 lire]. Zunz, l. c., 252, could only remark, "already dead at the commencement of the year 1593."

² Zunz, *ibid.*, 257 a and 260. Cf. Steinschneider, *Cat. Bodl.*, p. 2982, no. 8745. This Ephraim lost a son on April 28, 1589, cf. פנקס, fol. 35 d.

³ עם כל זה אני אברהם סמכתי עתה על ספרי התורה שנכתבו: שלשי הגבורים, fol. 176 b. על ידי הסופר רבי מאיר הנוכח ז"ל שהם שלשה וארבעים במספר שנחפשו ועלו בכל גלילות איטליאה והוכשרו כולם ולא שמעתי שמעולם שום חכם הדור על האופר הזה או פסל את ספריו. Cf. *ibid.*, fol. 174 a, fol. 3 b.

התחלתי לכתוב ס"ת שני היום יום ו' יד תמוז (א) יוניי שב בשם
הר' יעקב שמש כהן צדק השלמתי בעזרת האל לכתוב אותו יט מרחשון
כז אוטוב' שג ואז התחלתי לעשות התנים—הדפים הם קפנ.

. . . . שלישי קטן יום ו' ז' טבת טז דיצמב' שג לפק השלמתי בעזרת
האל יד אייר שג יה אפר' ואתחיל עתה לכתוב התנים—סך היריעות
נח—הדפים רה מכרתי אותו לה"ר יצחק פורטו יוניי אמר בעד הר
משה לוי מקסאל מאניורי והוכא שמה.

. . . . רביעי בע"ה יום ג' יב כסליו יד נומברי שז לפ"ק כתבתי עד
חצי התורה בס' שמיני כל הולך על נחון היום יום ד' כב טבת שז בעהי
ופסקתי כדי לכתוב תפילין הרבה: השלמתי בעהי יום ג' רה כסליו ש(ו)[ז]
ואתחיל לעשות התנין סך היריעות סב מכרתי אותו לכ' אליה פסח
מאימולר על ידי הנעלה כר אהרן מנובילארה. . . . נכדו שלמה
מסביוניטה י שבט ש(ו)[ז].

. . . . חמישי יום ו' יט ואדר יא מרצו שז בעה בשם כ"מ מנחם
אשכנזי יצו השלמתי בעהש יום ו' כא אלול שז ז' שיטמברי ואתחיל
עתה לעשות התנים. . . . כ"ה אוטוב' שח והביאו בלודי—סך היריעות
לג סך הדפים קעת.

. . . . ששי יום ג' כ' אדר כא פיבר' בשם כמהרר יוסף נורליני. . .
השלמתי בע"ה בימי חנוכה ו. . בקרימונה.

התחלתי בשלום לכתוב ס"ת שביעי יום עשרה בטבת שיא בשם ר'
רפאל הכהן המכונה ר' רפאל פאשולו מפירארא ונשארתי בפירארה בעדו
ע"י כ"ר אליעזר מנאסטאלה השלמתי בעדו כ"ד טבת שיב. . . לעשות
לו התנין.

. . . . שמיני בשם המפואר כר משה צבי מורציליסו והוא אחי מהאלמנה
מרת חנה אשת ר' שמשון זל ממסראן והתחלתי היום יום ו' כז טבת
שיב באמצעות המפואר והנעלה כמהרר יצחק פורטו השלמתי בערב ש"ק
נחמו שיג.

. . . . תשיעי בשם המשכיל כ' יחיאל מקרפי העומד ברימיני יום
ג' רה כסליו שיד באמצעות המפואר שלמה מאריני השלמתי בעה טז
תמוז שיד.

. . . . עשירי בשם המפואר כ"ר רפאל מוויכינה יו' ו' מו—שִׁיד השלמתי
בַּעַה יום ד' יו' שבט ט' גיינ' שְׁמו' והובא בית אל קודם הפסח.

. . . . שהוא אחד עשר אחר הפסח כב' ניסן יו' אפרי' שְׁמו' בשם
המפואר ברוך טודרוס גיסו מהנעלה כ יוסף—השלמתי לכתוב בַּעַה יום
א' כב' טבת שִׁי—ועתה אתחיל לעשות התנים—סך היריעות מִב' והדפים
קִסו' כי כל היריעות היו מד' דפים.

. . . . שנים עשר יום כד' טבת שִׁי בשם המשכיל כ"ר יהודה בכ"מ
נתן נורלינגי השלמתי בַּעַה ערב פסח שִׁי—סך היריעות מו'.

. . . . שהוא שלשה עשר ביום ו' ט"ז אייר ט"ו אפרי' שִׁי בשם כבוד
אוריאל מארני הדר בוואדנה ובהגיעי ספר ואלה שמות—על נפשי צרות
רבות ורעות —

התחלתי בשלום לכתוב סֵת שהוא תמשה עשר לשם כבוד מרדכי טרבוטי
יום ו' י' כסליו כט' נוימברי שְׁכָא כתבתי השליש מהסת עד כי אני ה'
רופאך ופסקתי זמן הרבה לכתוב בסֵת והשלמתי תל' היום יום ג' כז' תמוז
סוף גויניו שְׁכַ(ג) [ב] ועתה אשלים לעשות התנין סך היריעות מט' סך
הדפים קַעָא.

. . . . יו' קטן לשם כִּמֵר הושע מקולונייה בעד גיסו הדר באליכסנדריא
הנקרא גנבארנה היום יום צום אסתר שנת שְׁכָא ופסקתי לכתוב פרשת
דברים מפני חולי של הורתי וחזרתי לכתוב בסֵת ברח' מרחשון והשלמתי
בַּעַה יום א' טו' כסליו—סך היריעות הם לָה מד' דפים לאחד שהם
קִמ' דפים.

. . . . יו' קטן לשם מנחם סיני בעד גיסו הדר בא"לכסנדריה בימי
חנוכה שְׁכַג כבר נעשה בו ג' פרשיות השלמתי בעזרת האל יום ו' כז'
אייר כֵּא מאניו שְׁכַג ואתחיל לעשות התנין—סך היריעות יש מהם מנ'
דפין וד' וה' דפים סך הכל לט' וסך הדפים קִנזו.

. . . . יח' לשם כבוד אלישמע צרפתי יום ג' כ' מרחשון כֵּא אוטוברי
שְׁכַד השלמתי בַּעַה יום א' לָג לעומר יו' סיון ו' אפרילי שְׁכַד סך היריעות
חמישים וכולם מסך ד' דפים וג' דפים קַעָה דפים הכל.

. . . . שהוא תשעה עשר לשם הנעלה כ"ר יהודה דקולונייה יום ג' יג'
יוניו שְׁכַד השלמתי בַּעַה יום ב' כז' שבט כט' יינאיו שְׁכַה ועתה אתחיל
לעשות התנין—סך היריעות מט' סך כל הדפים קַעָט.

. . . . עשרים יום ד' צום אסתר שנת שכה לשם המפוארים ק"ק בני עיר פיסא עי' כמר יעקב מפבריינו וכר שלמה מקולורני — השלמתיו תל יום א' כו מרחשון כא אוטוברי שכו סך היריעות מא והם כולם מד' דפים מלבד — — שהם מג' דפים — וסך כל הדפים קסא.

. . . . אחד ועשרים קמן בד' במבת שנת שכו לשם הנעלה כמר הושע בקולונייה בעדו השלמתיו תל יום ד' כו לאייר טו מאייו שכ(ז)[ו] סך היריעות ה(י)ם לג' ויש מהם יז מחמישה דפים ויג' מד' וב' מג' דפים.

. . . . כב גדול מאוד ביום א' רה סיון ים מאנייו שכ(ז)[ו] לשם המפואר כ"ר דוד פונטנילה השלמתיו תל יום כב טבת ג' ניאו שכו — סך היריעות הם מד' והדפים הם קלב.

. . . . כג גדול ביום צום אסתר שנת שכו לשם המפואר כמר משה חזק השלמתיו תל יום ו' ז' אלול כב אנוסמו שכו ואתחיל לעשות התנים סך היריעות מד' והדפים קלו.

התחלתי בשלום לכתוב ס"ת שהוא כ"ד ביום ד' במבת שכה לשם המפואר רפאל פסח הדר בסול(ד)[ר] ולה וכתבתי עד פ' במדבר ופסקתי לכתוב מגלות וכמה זוגות תפילין ואחכ חזרתי לכתוב בסת הנל ברח אדר שכה השלמתי תל יום א' תמוז ד' לוליא שכה סך היריעות מב' רובם מד' דפים ובח' אנוסמו שכה שלחתי לו הסת.

. . . . כד היום יום ג' כז תשרי ים אוטוברי שכט לכמהחר יהושע וג' אחיו הכהנים מוירצילי והשלמתיו תל ים אדר ח' מרצו שכט ואתחיל לעשות התנין — סך היריעות מו חצי מהם מד' דפים והחצי מג' — סך הדפים קנט.

. . . . כה היום יום ג' מרחשון יז אוטוברי של לשם כ"ר יהודה המכונה ליאון מורילו דפאייא באמצעות שלמה מאוסטילייא השלמתיו תל ברח סיון של וגם כבר נעשה בו התנין עד ספר שמות.

. . . . כו היום יום ג' כא אלול כב אנוסמו של לשם המפואר כ"ר אליהו טרבוטי הדר בריגילי ע"י כ' שלמה השמש השלמתיו תל יום א' יז ואדר שלא ואתחיל לעשות התנין — סך היריעות מ' והיו כלם מד' דפים.

. . . . כז לשם החכם כמוהרר יוסף טריויש יצו הדר בסאויליאנו היום יום ו' כג אייר יז מאייו שלא עי' חנוך יחיאל בכמוהרר בעוז מברוך

זַלְּ וְזִכִּיתִי לְהַשְׁלִימוֹ יוֹם ד' כֵּן רִצִּימְבְּרִי ט' טַבַּת שֶׁלֶב — סֶךְ הִירֵיעוֹת לֹא
וִישׁ קֶצֶתָם מֵה' דָּפִים וְקֶצֶתָם מִד' וְאַתְחִיל לַעֲשׂוֹת הַתְּנִין.

. . . . כֵּט לִשְׁם הַמִּשְׁכֵּל כֵּר יוֹסֵף יַחִיאל דְּקוֹרְטִי מֵאֲגוּרִי בֶּכֶר אֲבֵרָהָם
מוֹוִיכִינָה זַלְּ הַיּוֹם יוֹם ד' יֵן אֲדָר צוֹם אֶסְתֵּר שֶׁלֶב הַנְּעִתִי בַּחֲצִי הַתּוֹרָה
יוֹם ג' יֵט סִיּוֹן שֶׁלֶב וְתֵל זִכִּיתִי לְהַשְׁלִימוֹ הַיּוֹם יוֹם א' כֵּד אֲב ג' אֲנוֹסְטוֹ
שֶׁלֶב וְאַתְחִיל לַעֲשׂוֹת הַתְּנִין סֶךְ הִירֵיעוֹת מֵב רֹבֵם ד' רִפִּין וּמַעַט מִג' סֶךְ
כָּל הַדָּפִים קָנוּ.

. . . . הַשְּׁלֵשִׁים שְׁאֲכָתוֹב לִשְׁם הַיֵּשֶׁשׁ הַנְּעִלָה כְּמֵהָרָד עֲמִינְדָב מִפֶּאֱנוֹ
הַיּוֹם יוֹם ו' ג' מִרְחָשׁוֹן ד' אוֹטוֹבְרִי שֶׁלֶג הַשְּׁלֵמְתִיו תֵּל יוֹם ו' ז' אִייר י'
אֲפִרְלִי שֶׁלֶג וְעִשִּׂיתִי בּוֹ הַתְּנִין לִימֵים עֲבָרוּ עַד י' הַדְּבָרוֹת בִּפ' יתרו — סֶךְ
הִירֵיעוֹת לֹא רֹבֵם מִד' דָּפִים.

. . . . הֵלֵא שְׁכַתְּבִתִּי בִּימֵי הַיּוֹם יוֹם ג' ז' תַּמּוֹן ט' גּוֹנִי שֶׁלֶג בַּעַד הַנְּעִלָה
כְּמֵר אֲלִיעֹר פּוֹיִיטוֹ יֵצוֹ לִשְׁם נִכְדוֹ כְּמֵר מִשֶּׁה טְרִיוֹן כֹּאשֶׁר כָּתַב אֵלִי הַנְּאוֹן
כְּמֹהָרֵר אֲבֵרָהָם מַע' אֲנִיִּלּוֹ מֵאֶסְטִי זִכִּיתִי תֵּל לְהַשְׁלִימוֹ יוֹם ו' יֵן רִצִּימְבְּרִי
כֵּד שִׁבְט שֶׁלֶד וְכִבֵּר נַעֲשֶׂה הַחֲצִי עִם הַתְּנִין — סֶךְ הִירֵיעוֹת מֵה'.

. . . . לֵב שְׁכַתְּבִתִּי הַיּוֹם יוֹם א' כֵּן אֲדָר רֵאשׁוֹן יֵד פִּיבְרִיו שֶׁלֶד לִשְׁם
הַמִּפּוֹאֵר כֵּר אֲבֵרָהָם דּוֹלֵה־נּוֹבָה כֵּר מִלְכִּיאל זַלְּ עִי כֵר שְׁלֵמָה מִפּוֹנְטְרִימּוֹלִי
הַשְּׁמִשׁ זִכִּיתִי לְהַשְׁלִימוֹ תֵּל יוֹם ג' ו' תַּמּוֹן כֵּט יוֹנִיִּי שֶׁלֶד וְכִבֵּר עִשִּׂיתִי הַחֲצִי
מֵהֶסֶת עִם הַתְּנִין סֶךְ הִירֵיעוֹת לֵט יוֹ מֵהֶם מִד' דָּפִים סֶךְ הַדָּפִים הֵם קֶלֶב.

. . . . לֵג שְׁכַתְּבִתִּי הַיּוֹם יוֹם א' כֵּן אֲב מֵן אֲנוֹשְׁטוֹ שֶׁלֶד לִשְׁם הַמִּפּוֹאֵר
כֵּר יְהוּדָה הַמְּכֻנָּה לִיאֹן מוֹרִילוֹ יֵצוֹ סֵגֶל מִפּוֹאִיָּא זִכִּיתִי לְהַשְׁלִימוֹ תֵּל יוֹם
ו' יֵט שִׁבְט כֵּן יִנְאִיוֹ שֶׁלֵּה — סֶךְ הִירֵיעוֹת לֵד שֶׁהֶם מִד' דָּפִים (כ)[ל] אֶחָד רֶק
כ' מִג' דָּפִים.

. . . . לֵד שְׁכַתְּבִתִּי עַד הֵנָּה הַיּוֹם יוֹם ו' ז' נִסָּן יֵן מִרְצוֹ שֶׁלֵּה לִשְׁם
הַכְּבוֹדָה מֵרֵת דִּיאֲנָה מֵהַטּוֹב מִבֵּת עֲזָרִי מַעַם ה' הַשְּׁלֵמְתִיו לְכָתוֹב בַּחֲסֵד ה'
יוֹם ו' יֵן אֶלּוֹל יֵט אֲנוֹסְטוֹ שֶׁלֵּה וְכִבֵּר עִשִּׂיתִי הַתְּנִין עַד פ' כִּי תִשָּׂא — סֶךְ
הִירֵיעוֹת לֵד וִישׁ מֵהֶם הֶרְבֵּה מֵה' דָּפִים לֶאֱחָד וְהַמּוֹתֵר הֵם מִד' דָּפִים.

הַתְּחִלְתִּי בְּשִׁלּוֹם תֵּל לְכָתוֹב א' ס"ת שֶׁהוּא לֵה שְׁכַתְּבִתִּי עַד הֵנָּה הַיּוֹם
יוֹם א' ה' מִרְחָשׁוֹן ט' אוֹטוֹבְרִי שֶׁלֵּו לִשְׁם הַמִּפּוֹאֵר כ"ר יִצְחָק יֵצוֹ מְנוֹרְצִי

בעד גיסו ר' משלם קווי השלמתיו תל ערב חג השבועות שלו וכבר נעשה
בו התנין עד פ' אחרי מות סך היריעות מב ויש מהם כו מד' דפים לאחת
והמותר מג' דפים סך כל הדפים קמז.

התחלתי ס"ת לו יום א' ינ בתמוז י' יונייו שלו לשם החכם כמהחר
קלונימוס יצו בכר שמואל פאווייה זל עי רב מרדכי סונצינו וכבר החל הנגע
בעם ומתו גם בביתו ג' נפשות בעוה ופסקתי מלכתוב בו זמן רב מפני
הצרות עברו עלי ואחכ חזרתי לכתוב בו והשלמתיו תל היום יום ו' ז' אדר
ראשון כב גיינאיו שלו ואתחיל לעשות בו התנין סך היריעות לו ויש בהן רק
ג' מג' דפין והמותר הם כולם מד' סך הדפים קמט.

ס"ת לו התחלתי בשלום לכתוב אותו ביום ג' כג ואדר יב מרצו שלו
לשם המנוח ר' משה נכדי זל בר דוד אחי זל להקים דברי המת השלמתיו
תל קודם רה שלו סך היריעות מא היינו כג מד' דפים ויה מהם ג' דפים
לאחת סך הדפים קמו.

. . . . יום רח מבת י' דצימברי של(ז)(ח) לשם המפואר כר משה
פולייסי יצו בר מנחם זל הדר בלודי חתנו היה מר אברהם הלוי דלארפה
ועל ידו נדרתי לשרתו בעהש הנעתי בפ' קורח ביז ניסן שלו ועמדתי ב'
תדשים שלא היה לי יריעות וחזרתי לכתוב והשלמתיו תל יום ג' י(ז)(ט)
תמוז כד יונייו של(ז)(ח) ואשלים התנין מפ' קורח ועד סופו היריעות הם
לו והם מד' דפים לאחד רק שנים הם מג' דפין סך הדפים קמב.

. . . . אותו ספר קמן לשם הנעלה אליעזר פנייטו הדר באסטי ביום ג'
ינ מרחשון יד אוטוברי שלט על פי הכתבים שכתב אלי החכם כמהרר
אברהם דע' אנייול השלמתיו תל יום ו' ח' ואדר (ז)(י) מרצו שלט וכבר
עשיתי לו התנין עד ספר אלה הדברים סך היריעות לד כג מהם מד'
דפים יא מהם מג' סך כל הדפים קכב.

. . . . לשם כמר מרדכי יצו בר רפאל מנורצי בר"ח תמוז כה יונייו שלט
ופסקתי לכתוב בימי המועדים מפני צרות המומר והחוקר שעמדתי בבית
הסוהר יב ימים בימים הנוראים וזכיתי תל להתפלל עם הצבור ביום הושענא
רבה ברוך פודה ומציל זאת ועוד אחרת אחכ ותקע כף רגלי עם צרות
רבות ועמדתי במטה כמו ו' חדשים השלמתיו תל יום א' (ה') גיינו כב סיון

שם סך היריעות מַג יב מהם מַג דפים והמותר ד' רפים סך כל הדפים קָן.

. . . . לשם כַּר משה כַּר שמואל דמילי הדר בוידאנה יום א' כַּט סיון שַׁמ יב גויינו השלמתיו תַּל יום ג' טו כסליו כב נוימברי שַׁמא סך היריעות מ' רובם ד' דפים רק ה' מהם ג' דפים לאחד ואתחיל לעשות התנין סך הדפים קַנב.

. . . . לשם החכם כַּמהַר חנניה מנוולו יום א' טו גינאיו יא שבט שַׁמא השלמתיו תַּל לכתוב יום ג' יט תמוז כ' גויניו שַׁמא וגם כבר עשיתי לו התנין רובם סך הדפים קַצד.

. . . . גם ה' יתן הטוב לשם המפואר כַּמ שמואל כהן יחיאל בר חיים כהן — — הדר בעיר אלכסנדריה יום ו' כ(א) אב שַׁמא השלמתיו תַּל יום א' י' דיצמברי טו טבת שַׁמב ואתחיל לעשות התנין סך היריעות מַב סך הדפים קַסה.

התחלתי בשלום לכתוב סַת מַד לשם קרובי כַּר משה כַּר מליטו זל אחי שני היום יום א' אסרו חג של פסח טו אפרילי שַׁמב.